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How Books Become Miniseries • The New Look in Book Jacke
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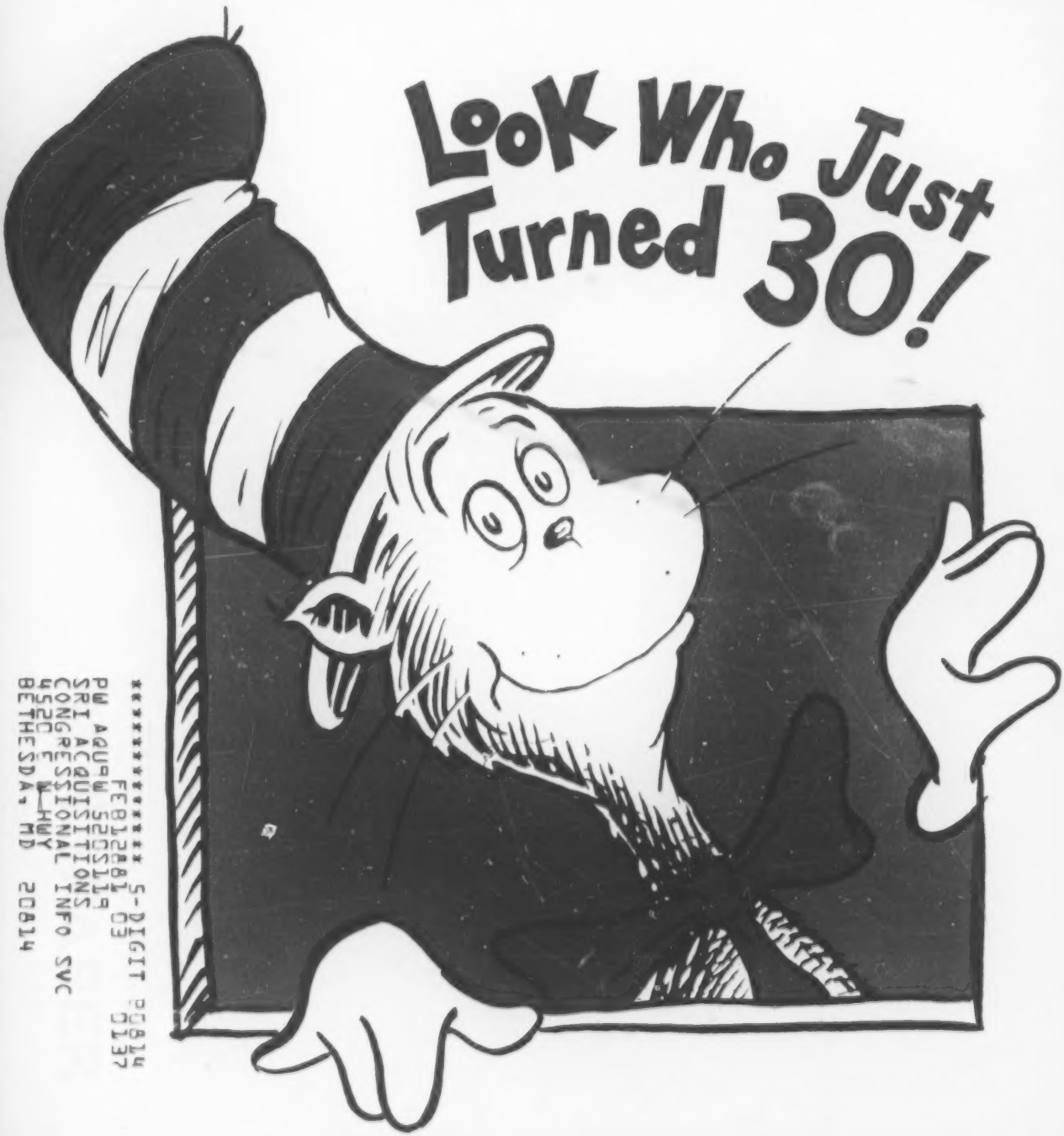
# Publishers Weekly

A CAHNERS PUBLICATION *THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS MAGAZINE OF BOOK PUBLISHING* APRIL 3, 1987 $2

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# Publishers Weekly

VOLUME 231 NUMBER 13
ISSN 000-0019

*THE INTERNATIONAL NEWS MAGAZINE OF BOOK PUBLISHING*

APRIL 3, 1987

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BY JOHN P. DESSAUER

# Slow Finish to Lackluster 1986

Like the twilight economy itself, book sales were less than spectacular in 1986. Trade books held their own because children's continued to perform well and because small publishers contributed more solidly than in the past to the pre–Christmas success of independent retailers. "Big" consumer markets were less successful. Mass market paperbacks declined in both dollars and units, and merchandisers discovered, as they have so often in the past, that during unfavorable economic periods the industry comes to depend more on habitual, discriminating book buyers while many occasional buyers fall by the wayside.

A disappointment in 1986 was the slowing of school purchases, the resurgence of which had been expected to continue at its 1985 pace, but which achieved only about half the predicted growth. College textbook sales showed only modest dollar increases and substantial unit declines. Professional books, on the other hand, registered solid gains in both dollars and units.

Among the market sectors, only general retailers and libraries posted modest unit advances, while the direct-to-consumer market continued to languish. As long as economic conditions continue in their present, lukewarm state, isolated, marginal advances may be all we can hope for.□

TABLE 1

## ESTIMATED PUBLISHERS' NET BOOK SALES—FOURTH QUARTER 1986

(Millions of Dollars and Units)

| | Oct.–Dec. 1986 | | Oct.–Dec. 1985 | | Percent Change | | Jan.–Dec. 1986 | | Jan.–Dec. 1985 | | Percent Change | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Dollars | Units | Dollars | Units | Dollars | Units | Dollars | Units | Dollars | Units | Dollars | Units |
| Trade | 972.0 | 215.94 | 919.2 | 219.32 | 5.7 | (1.5) | 2,979.1 | 697.21 | 2,710.0 | 694.78 | 9.9 | 0.3 |
| Adult Hardbound | 559.1 | 88.28 | 563.2 | 95.76 | (0.7) | (7.8) | 1,607.9 | 257.59 | 1,465.7 | 248.70 | 9.7 | 3.6 |
| Adult Paperbound | 245.1 | 62.10 | 209.0 | 58.04 | 17.3 | 7.0 | 802.4 | 210.81 | 754.8 | 227.85 | 6.3 | (7.5) |
| Juvenile Hardbound | 111.4 | 30.10 | 98.5 | 28.95 | 13.0 | 4.0 | 391.5 | 112.27 | 344.9 | 101.31 | 13.5 | 10.8 |
| Juvenile Paperbound | 56.5 | 35.47 | 48.5 | 36.57 | 16.4 | (3.0) | 177.4 | 120.08 | 144.6 | 116.92 | 22.7 | 2.7 |
| Religious | 210.6 | 42.20 | 197.3 | 43.55 | 6.8 | (3.1) | 699.2 | 145.15 | 657.6 | 153.00 | 6.3 | (5.1) |
| Hardbound | 149.4 | 18.46 | 138.6 | 19.03 | 7.7 | (3.0) | 493.5 | 63.38 | 462.1 | 67.95 | 6.8 | (6.7) |
| Paperbound | 61.3 | 23.74 | 58.6 | 24.52 | 4.5 | (3.2) | 205.7 | 81.77 | 195.5 | 85.05 | 5.2 | (3.9) |
| Professional | 568.4 | 39.66 | 497.3 | 35.06 | 14.3 | 13.1 | 2,533.7 | 176.99 | 2,270.9 | 159.73 | 11.6 | 10.8 |
| Hardbound | 376.0 | 13.31 | 334.7 | 12.54 | 12.3 | 6.1 | 1,684.2 | 60.36 | 1,528.3 | 57.00 | 10.2 | 5.9 |
| Paperbound | 192.4 | 26.35 | 162.6 | 22.52 | 18.3 | 17.0 | 849.5 | 116.63 | 742.6 | 102.73 | 14.4 | 13.5 |
| Book Club | 66.4 | 12.83 | 66.3 | 13.82 | 0.1 | (7.1) | 573.2 | 105.16 | 560.0 | 109.21 | 2.4 | (3.7) |
| Hardbound | 53.5 | 4.55 | 53.3 | 4.95 | 0.4 | (8.0) | 476.3 | 41.44 | 463.8 | 42.76 | 2.7 | (3.1) |
| Paperbound | 12.8 | 8.28 | 13.0 | 8.87 | (1.2) | (6.6) | 96.9 | 63.71 | 96.2 | 66.45 | 0.7 | (4.1) |
| Mail Order Publications | 134.1 | 23.44 | 144.5 | 27.22 | (7.2) | (13.9) | 580.2 | 114.64 | 578.5 | 114.99 | 0.3 | (0.3) |
| Mass Market Paperbacks | 197.2 | 129.73 | 221.3 | 145.76 | (10.9) | (11.0) | 943.0 | 571.34 | 946.8 | 583.00 | (0.4) | (2.0) |
| University Presses | 32.0 | 2.79 | 29.5 | 2.74 | 8.5 | 1.8 | 113.4 | 11.44 | 105.1 | 11.57 | 7.8 | (1.1) |
| Hardbound | 25.3 | 1.39 | 23.6 | 1.40 | 7.5 | (1.0) | 81.9 | 4.59 | 76.3 | 4.71 | 7.3 | (2.5) |
| Paperbound | 6.6 | 1.40 | 5.9 | 1.34 | 12.3 | 4.7 | 31.4 | 6.85 | 28.8 | 6.86 | 9.2 | (0.1) |
| Elhi Text | 160.4 | 28.21 | 186.0 | 29.74 | (13.7) | (5.2) | 1,581.7 | 256.70 | 1,478.7 | 248.86 | 7.0 | 3.1 |
| Hardbound | 78.0 | 7.63 | 105.3 | 8.04 | (26.0) | (5.0) | 899.2 | 90.16 | 837.2 | 91.51 | 7.4 | (1.5) |
| Paperbound | 82.5 | 20.57 | 80.7 | 21.70 | 2.2 | (5.2) | 682.6 | 149.95 | 641.5 | 157.35 | 6.4 | (4.7) |
| College Text | 401.1 | 26.73 | 385.5 | 28.60 | 4.1 | (6.5) | 1,550.8 | 107.90 | 1,472.3 | 120.3 | 5.3 | (10.3) |
| Hardbound | 337.5 | 17.86 | 324.0 | 18.94 | 4.2 | (5.7) | 1,306.6 | 72.48 | 1,237.3 | 80.65 | 5.6 | (10.1) |
| Paperbound | 63.6 | 8.87 | 61.5 | 9.66 | 3.3 | (8.2) | 244.2 | 35.42 | 235.0 | 39.60 | 3.9 | (10.6) |
| Subscription Ref. | 61.1 | 0.16 | 61.8 | 0.17 | (1.2) | (6.8) | 215.9 | 0.56 | 218.5 | 0.58 | (1.2) | (3.3) |
| Total | 2,803.4 | 521.69 | 2,708.7 | 545.98 | 3.5 | (4.4) | 11,770.2 | 2,215.35 | 10,998.4 | 2,195.97 | 7.0 | 0.9 |

TABLE 2

## ESTIMATED DOMESTIC CONSUMER EXPENDITURES ON BOOKS—FOURTH QUARTER 1986

(Millions of Dollars and Units)

| | Oct.–Dec. 1986 | | Oct.–Dec. 1985 | | Percent Change | | Jan.–Dec. 1986 | | Jan.–Dec. 1985 | | Percent Change | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Dollars | Units | Dollars | Units | Dollars | Units | Dollars | Units | Dollars | Units | Dollars | Units |
| General Retailers | 2,343.3 | 373.14 | 2,160.3 | 363.55 | 8.5 | 2.6 | 6,664.04 | 1,042.16 | 6,102.60 | 1022.71 | 9.2 | 1.9 |
| College Stores | 338.6 | 32.19 | 326.9 | 34.03 | 3.6 | (5.4) | 2,745.65 | 247.75 | 2,614.90 | 258.07 | 5.0 | (4.0) |
| Libraries & Institutions | 402.6 | 32.29 | 369.0 | 31.32 | 9.1 | 3.1 | 1,386.93 | 96.45 | 1,277.10 | 94.01 | 8.6 | 2.6 |
| Schools | 360.2 | 53.44 | 377.7 | 61.19 | (4.6) | (12.7) | 1,828.74 | 264.69 | 1,709.10 | 269.66 | 7.0 | (1.8) |
| Direct to Consumer | 753.9 | 97.03 | 747.9 | 100.83 | 0.8 | (3.8) | 2,175.98 | 281.32 | 2,112.60 | 284.78 | 3.0 | (1.2) |
| Other | 20.9 | 8.87 | 21.2 | 9.61 | (1.6) | (7.7) | 272.13 | 116.86 | 249.20 | 114.83 | 9.2 | 1.8 |
| Total | 4,219.5 | 596.96 | 4,003.0 | 600.54 | 5.4 | (0.6) | 15,073.5 | 2,049.23 | 14,065.5 | 2,044.06 | 7.2 | 0.3 |